

# You can save a life!

Assess Risks Training Prevention Know the history Always be prepared to help Primary Care Physician Know the symptoms Call 911  
Communicate concerns Strategize Prepare Team Be alert Plan Ahead Evaluations



## Be Aware of Choking Hazards with Food

Before you eat that...you may want to read the label. Many food producers are placing warning labels on packages to alert consumers to a possible choking hazard.

Not all potential choking hazards are labeled as such so, it is important that consumer support teams continue conversations about a person's choking history/potential and how to minimize that risk.

Teams should consider the following during planning meetings:

 **RISK ASSESSMENTS:** Identify if a person is at risk of choking and strategize prevention measures.

 **FOOD PREPARATION:** High-risk foods such as hotdogs, raw carrots, grapes and apples should be prepared in sizes or consistencies that minimize a person's risk of choking

 **TRAINING:** Caregivers must be current with all training including choking prevention and treatment techniques.

Equal Opportunity Employer / Program •  
Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities • To request this document in alternative format or for further information about this policy, contact the Division of Developmental Disabilities Customer Service Center at 1-844-770-9500; TTY/ TDD Services: 7-1-1  
DDD-1558APAMNA (11 -11)



## Choking

Prevention is no accident! Be...

- Alert
- Prepared
- Trained
- Ready

KNOW THE NUMBER 911



## Aspiration & Asphyxiation

Aspiration takes place when anything other than air goes into the airway and lungs, causing pneumonia. Suffocation is the fatal effect of: Asphyxiation (lack of oxygen in the lungs) and can be prevented if the object is removed from the air passage.

Avoiding choking, aspiration & asphyxiation

- Know if the person has past issues with choking and pneumonia.
- Pay attention to problematic habits, such as eating food quickly, and swallowing large portions.
- Learn about the person's medications and if they can lead to problems eating food.

The individual's Risk Assessment Plan should clearly state what precautions should be taken to prevent an occurrence of aspiration or asphyxiation if they are at risk.



## Prevention Is The Key

Most common foods consumers have choked on are meat balls, burritos, hotdogs, vegetables, peanut butter. What should you do if a person has a choking accident?

- Reconvene Individual Support Plan (ISP) Team and review the consumer's ISP/ BTP/ Risk Assessment.
- If choking is not already identified on the Risk Assessment, make certain it is added.
- Determine strategies that will minimize the risk of choking from occurring again, e.g. cut food into bite-sized pieces, increase supervision. Specify the level of supervision: "sitting next to and watching Joey eat" or "sitting across from Joey observing during all meals and snacks".

Determine other actions that may be necessary, such as a referral to Primary Care Physician (PCP), a Swallow Study, or Nutritionist.

## Be Proactive!

Don't wait for a choking incident to occur before it is identified as a risk and strategies implemented. Someone's chances of choking are much greater if, for example, they have a tendency to overfill their mouth, have difficulty chewing/swallowing, or rely on someone else to feed them.

## Be Alert!

**Choking** is a blockage of the upper airway by food or other objects, that prevents a person from breathing effectively. Choking can cause a simple coughing episode or may completely block the airway resulting in death. It is imperative that caregivers are able to recognize the signs of choking so appropriate emergency actions can be taken.

### Choking symptoms:

Coughing—Gagging—Hand signals— Panic sometimes pointing to the throat—Sudden Inability to talk—Clutching at the throat— Wheezing—Passing out—Turning blue.

### Actions to take:

Choking is a medical emergency. Fast and appropriate life saving actions by caregivers are necessary to save a choking person's life. Caregivers need to be prepared to help. Be up-to-date on life-saving treatment methods and CPR training. Instruct someone else to call 9-1-1 Emergency Medical Services. Never leave a choking victim. Immediately begin life-saving treatment.

In the event of any emergency call 9-1-1 immediately!